

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21-22, 24-27, 33-43 are pending in the application, with claims 1, 13, and 27 being the independent claims. Claims 1, 13, 27, 41-43 have been amended. Support for the changes to the amended claims and for the new claims can be found, for example, at paragraphs [0097-0107] of the published application.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 5, 13, 19, 27, 33-40 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,734,879 to Hasha et al. ("Hasha") and Pub. No. US 2002/0022991 to Sharood et al. ("Sharood") and U.S. Patent No. 7,358,956 to Hinckley et al. ("Hinckley").

The Examiner has also rejected claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21-22, 24-27, and 33-40 under section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pub. No. US 2003/0103088 to Dresti et al. ("Dresti") and U.S. Patent No. 6,198,479 to Humpleman et al. ("Humpleman") and Hinckley.

For the reasons set forth below, Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejections.

Neither the Hasha-Sharood-Hinckley nor Dresti-Humpleman-Hinckley Combinations Proposed by the Examiner Teach or Suggest Each and Every Limitation of Applicants' Claimed Invention

The Examiner concedes that neither the Hasha and Sharwood combination nor the Dresti and Humpleman combination relied upon by the Examiner teach all the elements defining Applicants' invention, including that the control objects representing affiliate system components associated with a selected activity can be pre-configured by a user to be hidden from view on the GUI, as recited in amended independent claims 1, 13, and 27. Specifically, as the Examiner correctly recognizes, Hasha-Sharood and Dresti-Humpleman are devoid of disclosure relating to "a third set of control objects representing one or more affiliate system components capable of providing an input to said selected system component and associated with performing the selected activity, but pre-configured by a user to be hidden from display on the user interface" as recited in amended claim 1, or the step of "hiding from display on the user interface one or more affiliate system components that are associated with performing the selected activity but are pre-configured by a user not to be displayed" as recited in amended claim 13, or "computer readable program code for hiding from display on the user interface one or more affiliate system components that are associated with performing the selected activity but are pre-configured by a user not to be displayed" as recited in amended claim 27.

In view of the admitted shortcoming of the cited references, the Examiner relies on yet another reference, Hinckley, to fabricate yet two new proposed combinations that allegedly render Applicants' invention obvious: Hasha-Sharood-Hinckley and Dresti-Humpleman-Hinckley. But despite the Examiner's efforts, these combinations also fall short. Simply put, Hinckley does not cure the deficiency in the art of record, but merely serves to highlight and confirm the patentability of Applicants' invention.

Hinckley is directed to the use of a touch-sensitive input device for interfacing with a computer. According to Hinckley, a computer input device (e.g., a keyboard or a mouse) is equipped with touch sensors that can sense contact with or even the proximity of a user's finger. When the user touches (or when the user's finger comes near) a certain key on the keyboard (or a certain button on the mouse), that event triggers the display on the computer screen of certain information regarding that key or button, such as what function that key or button performs or what options are available to the user respecting that key or button (e.g., via a drop-down toolbar). This feature provides the user with on-screen displays of status, state information, or other feedback relevant to the button or key that the user has touched, but not activated. Conversely, when the user breaks contact with (or when the user withdraws his finger from the proximity of) the key or button, the displayed information disappears from the screen. This feature, according to Hinckley, provides for the reduction of on-screen clutter and easier viewing.

The contact-based or proximity-based sensor feature described in Hinckley, however, does not reasonably equate to the unique and non-obvious features claimed by Applicants relating to the user's ability to pre-configure control objects on a graphic user interface (GUI) representing affiliate system components associated with a selected activity so that they are hidden from view on the GUI, as recited in amended independent claims 1, 13, and 27. In Hinckley, the user does not "pre-configure" in any sense the on-screen displays such that they are hidden from display. Rather, in Hinckley, the ability to display information on screen and remove such information from the screen is simply a binary and reflexive function (display/remove) that depends entirely on movement of the user's finger (contact/no contact) in real time. By the same token, nothing is

“hidden” in Hinckley: the on-screen information relating to a selected key or button is either displayed or it is not displayed based on whether the user is touching the key or button or not. In fact, if a user in Hinckley were to continually touch a particular button, the on-screen information relating to that button would continually display on the screen.

This is contrary to Applicants’ invention and underscores a critical distinction from the two triple-reference combinations proposed by the Examiner in support of his obviousness rejection. According to Applicants’ invention, the user can pre-configure the GUI of a control device used to control a plurality of system components. Specifically, as described in detail in the present Application, various control screens enable a user to configure or set-up in advance which system components are to be displayed on a GUI and which ones are to be hidden from display ((see Paragraphs [0091] to [0097] of the published application). Any particular configuration set up by the user is fixed until the user sets up a different configuration. Such a capability is completely absent from the references of record, either individually or collectively.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that neither the proposed combination of Hasha and Sharood and Hinckley nor the proposed combination of Dresti and Humpleman and Hinckley render independent claims 1, 13 and 27 unpatentable under Section 103(a).

Dependent Claims

The claims that depend from independent claims 1, 13, and 27, are likewise not rendered unpatentable by the Hasha-Sharood-Hinckley combination or the Dresti-Humpleman-Hinckley combination for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend and further in view of their own respective features.

For example, Applicants submit that claims 41 through 43 recite features that are not taught or suggested by the Hasha-Sharood-Hinckley or the Dresti-Humpleman-Hinckley combinations. Contrary to that asserted by the Examiner, neither of those reference combinations disclose providing proxy control options for controlling affiliated system components associated with the selected activity but that are pre-configured by the user to be hidden from display on the user interface. For example, Hinckley discloses a “hot key” that can be assigned multiple functions available for selection by the user. A user can touch (but not activate) the key to view and select a certain function among multiple available functions. Once that function is selected, the user can fully activate the key to perform the desired function. The user can reassign a new function to that key by following the same procedure.

But this hot-key feature does not undermine the patentability of claims 41 through 43. The ability to assign and select multiple functions to a single key according to Hinckley does not equate to the use of “proxy” controls on a GUI to control a hidden device according to Applicants’ invention. Hidden devices are devices that have been pre-configured by the user to be hidden from display on the GUI—however they still operate (albeit invisibly to the user) with other devices in accordance with the selected activity. Control of such hidden devices is accomplished via proxy controls applicable to displayed affiliated devices. For example, a user viewing a DVD on his or her television can increase the volume by adjusting the television’s volume control displayed on the GUI (where the television is a non-hidden device), but in reality, the actual volume commands activated by the user via the GUI are directed to the amplifier device (which controls volume but is usually pre-configured as a hidden device). Accordingly, the

displayed television volume controls act as a proxy for the hidden amplifier device (whose controls are not displayed). This is yet another novel and non-obvious aspect of Applicants' invention.

Conclusion

Because the Hasha-Sharood-Hinckley combination proposed by the Examiner does not teach or suggest each and every feature of independent claims 1, 13 and 27, as explained above, these claims, and the claims that depend therefrom, cannot be rendered unpatentable for obviousness by that combination.

Similarly, because the Dresti-Humpleman-Hinckley combination proposed by the Examiner does not teach or suggest each and every feature of independent claims 1, 13 and 27, as explained above, these claims, and the claims that depend therefrom, also cannot be rendered unpatentable for obviousness by that combination.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner's rejection of pending claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21-22, 24-27, 33-43 be reconsidered and withdrawn and allowed to issue.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicant believes that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RS', is written over the printed name of Robert Sokohl.

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